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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - MIDDLE EAST - GAZA

DISENGAGEMENT IRAN

PARIS - FRIDAY, AUGUST 19, 2005

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

MIDDLE EAST- GAZA DISENGAGEMENT
IRAN

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

A VARIETY OF STORIES MAKE TODAY'S FRONT PAGES, WITH THE POPE'S VISIT TO COLOGNE THE LEAD IN LE FIGARO AND LA CROIX. LIBERATION DEVOTES ITS HEADLINE TO AIRLINE SAFETY AND THE NEED FOR A "BLACK LIST" OF UNSAFE AIRLINES, WHILE FINANCIAL LA TRIBUNE DEVOTES PROMINENT FRONT-PAGE AND EDITORIAL COVERAGE TO CHINA'S "BANKING BIG-BANG." ITS TWO-PAGE INSIDE REPORT ANALYZES CHINA'S ATTRACTIVENESS FOR FOREIGN INVESTMENT IN ITS BANKING SECTOR. BANK OF AMERICA, WHICH HAS SHARES IN THE CHINA CONSTRUCTION BANK, IS NOTED AS A PIONEER.

BUT GAZA'S DISENGAGEMENT AND SHARON'S "POLITICAL REALISM" ARE TODAY'S LEAD EDITORIAL STORIES, WITH LE FIGARO, LE MONDE AND LES ECHOS SHARING SIMILAR POINTS OF VIEW. (SEE PART C) SECRETARY RICE'S INTERVIEW IN THE NEW YORK TIMES IS PICKED UP

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IN LA CROIX, WHICH TITLES ITS REPORT ON GAZA: "CONDOLEEZZA RICE ASKS THAT THE PROCESS `NOT STOP WITH GAZA.'"

THE MILITARY SHOW OF FORCE BY MOSCOW AND CHINA IS REPORTED IN LE FIGARO AND LIBERATION, WHICH COMMENTS: "BEIJING AND MOSCOW ARE FLEXING THEIR MUSCLES. THEIR JOINT MILITARY OPERATIONS ARE A DEMONSTRATION OF FORCE AIMED AT WASHINGTON. ACCORDING TO THE PARTICIPANTS, THE OBJECTIVE IS TO IMPROVE THEIR COOPERATION IN MATTERS OF DEFENSE AND IN THE FIGHT AGAINST INTERNATIONAL TERRORISM. BUT BEHIND THE DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE THERE IS A DESIRE TO DEMONSTRATE TO THE U.S., WHICH IS INCREASINGLY PRESENT IN CENTRAL ASIA, THAT THE TWO COUNTRIES COUNT FOR SOMETHING. THIS DEMONSTRATION OF FORCE IS SURE TO WORRY WASHINGTON."

IRAN'S NUCLEAR FUTURE IS THE BASIS FOR AN OP-ED BY RESEARCHER THERESE DELPECHE IN LE FIGARO. (SEE PART C)

RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO REPORTS THAT "WASHINGTON WANTS TO CHANGE THE IMAGE OF GUANTANMO" IN AN ARTICLE BY WASHINGTON CORRESPONDENT GUILLEMETTE FAURE: "THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION DOES NOT WANT AN INDEPENDENT INQUIRY ON GUANTANAMO. IT IS ALSO LOOKING TO DEFUSE THE PROJECT BY THREE REPUBLICAN SENATORS WHO WANT TO DRAFT A BILL MAKING `CRUEL AND INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT OF DETAINEES' ILLEGAL. HENCE THE ADMINISTRATION'S SERIOUS PUBLIC RELATIONS EFFORTS TO MAKE GUANTANAMO LOOK BETTER. IN THE COMING YEAR, TWO THIRDS OF THE DETAINEES ARE TO BE SENT BACK TO THEIR COUNTRIES."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

MIDDLE EAST- GAZA DISENGAGEMENT

"THE TWO SHARONS"

LEFT-OF-CENTER LE MONDE IN ITS UNSIGNED EDITORIAL (08/19):
"WHAT WILL THE POST-GAZA LOOK LIKE? ONE MIGHT BE INCLINED TO WONDER WHETHER SHARON'S LATEST DECLARATIONS ABOUT `PURSUING' THE SETTLEMENTS IN THE WEST BANK WILL NOT GO THE WAY OF PASSED DECLARATIONS ABOUT `MAINTAINING AT ALL COSTS' THE SETTLEMENTS IN GAZA. EVEN IF SHARON'S UNILATERAL DISENGAGEMENT FROM GAZA WENT PROBABLY AGAINST HIS OWN DEEP BELIEFS, HE HAS, BY GOING THROUGH WITH THE PULLOUT, UNLEASHED A POLITICAL EARTHQUAKE OF HISTORICAL PROPORTIONS FOR HIS COUNTRY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE PALESTINIANS. SHARON HAS DONE WHAT NONE OF HIS PREDECESSORS, WHETHER LABOR OR LIKUD, DID IN 38 YEARS: DISMANTLE SETTLEMENTS WITHOUT ANY `COUNTERPART', SIMPLY BECAUSE ISRAEL CAN NO LONGER KEEP THEM AND HAS AN OBLIGATION TO LEAVE. IN SHORT, SHARON HAS EMBARKED ON A NEW ROAD. TOMORROW, SHARON WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM OF THE WEST BANK. IT IS FAIR TO HOPE THAT, AS WAS THE CASE FOR GAZA, HE ALREADY KNOWS DEEP DOWN THAT THE FUTURE OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN RELATIONSHIP PASSES NECESSARILY THROUGH THAT SAME NEW ROAD."

"SHARON AND THE TEST OF GAZA"

YVES THREARD IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (08/19): "THE DISENGAGEMENT FROM GAZA WAS QUICKER THAN EXPECTED. WE MUST NEVERTHELESS REMAIN CAUTIOUS. SHARON PREPARED THE MILITARY AND FINANCIAL ASPECTS OF THE PULLOUT WELL AND FAR IN ADVANCE. ON THE PALESTINIAN SIDE, ABBAS IS NOT ARAFAT: HE DEALS IN POLITICS, NOT PSYCHOLOGY. FOR HAMAS, IT IS A DAY OF GLORY. IT IS SAVORING ITS VICTORY AS IF THE ISRAELI DISENGAGEMENT WAS PROOF OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ITS COMBAT. HAMAS IS A TERRORIST ORGANIZATION AND WILL REMAIN SO. BOTH SIDES HAVE MUCH AT STAKE, BUT MORE IN THE DAYS TO COME THAN TODAY. THE PEACE PROCESS IS NOT BACK ON THE RAILS, THE CONFLICT REMAINS, ONLY ITS PREMISE HAS CHANGED. THE WEST HAS AN IMPORTANT CARD TO PLAY IN THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF GAZA TO KEEP IT FROM FALLING INTO CHAOS AND BECOMING A BREEDING GROUND FOR TERRORISTS. SHARON FOR HIS PART HAS MADE A GESTURE NO ONE EXPECTED. THE MAN REMEMBERED FOR SABRA AND CHATILA HAS BEEN, DURING HIS CAREER, BOTH A HAWK AND A DOVE. MANY ACCUSE HIM OF ACTING WITHOUT A PLAN. SHARON HAS NEVER SHARED IN THE DREAM OF ERETZ ISRAEL. POLITICAL REALISM IS WHAT DICTATES HIS POLICY. AND HE KNOWS THAT IN THE END THE ROAD TO PEACE WILL BEGIN AND END IN JERUSALEM."

"FIRST STEP, GAZA"

RIGHT-OF-CENTER LES ECHOS'S EDITORIAL (08/19): "SHARON HAS WON THE FIRST SET OF HIS GAME PLAN. THE MAIN QUESTION NOW IS WHETHER THE SECOND SET WILL BE PLAYED OUT AROUND A NEGOTIATING TABLE OR IN THE STREETS. THERE IS LITTLE TIME LEFT BEFORE CHOOSING."

IRAN

"FOR IRAN, AUGUST IS THE CRUCIAL MONTH"

RESEARCHER THERESE DELPECHE IN RIGHT-OF-CENTER LE FIGARO (08/19): "THE QUESTION TODAY IS HOW MUCH MORE TIME DOES IRAN NEED FOR ITS URANIUM CONVERSION. ESTIMATES SUGGEST ABOUT A MONTH AND A HALF. THE OTHER QUESTION IS ABOUT WHEN THE ISSUE WILL BE PUT BEFORE THE UNSC. THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S AGENDA FOR SEPTEMBER IS UN REFORM. SUCH AN IMPORTANT TOPIC CANNOT BE 'POLLUTED' WITH THE IRANIAN ISSUE. THEREFORE NOTHING WILL BE DONE BEFORE THE END OF SEPTEMBER. BY THEN, IT WILL BE TOO LATE TO THREATEN IRAN, WHATEVER THE DETERMINATION OF THE VARIOUS PLAYERS. IRAN WILL THEREFORE HAVE ITS BOMB, AND ALL THOSE WHO- EUROPEANS, AMERICANS AND RUSSIANS- HAVE DECLARED THAT THIS IS 'UNACCEPTABLE' WILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE CHOICES THEY MADE IN AUGUST 2005." HOFMANN